



Royal Institute of International Affairs

Not for Publication.

GIFT OF NO. 10 ST. JAMES'S SQUARE  
TO THE  
BRITISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL  
AFFAIRS.

I

ON October 9th, a General Meeting of the members of the Institute was held at 10 St. James's Square. Mr. Headlam-Morley was in the chair. On behalf of the Executive Committee, Lord Meston made a statement regarding the proposals to be put before the meeting. After a lengthy discussion, a number of resolutions recommended for acceptance by the Executive Committee were passed and adopted.

A summary of Lord Meston's statement follows, together with a copy of the resolutions :

As this meeting is going to be asked to take decisions of much importance, I may have to draw somewhat fully on your patience while I unfold the story of what has happened since our last General Meeting, and explain the proposals which the Executive Committee ask you to consider. As I proceed it will be apparent to you how difficult it would have been to consult the full Institute while those proposals were being matured, at a time of the year when most of our members were out of London, and the stages in our negotiations were often intolerant of even a few days' delay. I can assure you that the Executive Committee have taken the very earliest opportunity of putting the whole of their proceedings before you for your decision.

This institute was founded to be a national centre of

international thought. It was to enable its members to study the relation, from day to day, between national policies and the interests of society as a whole. It was to produce, among other publications, an Annual Register of International Affairs. It was to be housed in London on a site convenient to public men, with room for research and quiet documented study, with room also for meetings and discussions on current questions, conducted for mutual information and for the moulding of a wise and discriminating public opinion.

From these purposes we have never varied. Starting with very small beginnings, we subsequently obtained, through the friendly offices of Professor Pollard, the comfortable suite of rooms which we now occupy in the Institute of Historical Research; and we have every reason to be grateful for the comfort, friendliness and help received from the Institute and its officials. In less than a year from now, however, it will be possible to break our lease; and your Committee, at our last General Meeting, raised the question of whether we should stay in our present quarters or seek a home elsewhere. So well as I could judge the sense of the meeting on that occasion, it remitted the inquiry to the Executive Committee; but it went far to confirm certain considerations in favour of a move which had already been impressed upon your Committee. Malet Street could not be called a central site for our regular business. Still less convenient is it for purposes of consultation or research by public men at Westminster, officers of the services, or officials in Whitehall. If our upward curve of expansion continues as it has done in the last three years, our Malet Street rooms will have become quite inadequate, either for meetings or for the equipment of study, long before the full period of the lease could mature. Our inclinations moved, I will not say unanimously, but in the main definitely, towards the search for a more permanent home more closely approximating to the description which I quoted a minute ago as in the minds of our founders.

At this stage we heard by accident of an Association which

was engaged in the same quest. On its behalf, three gentlemen had obtained a short option to purchase a historic and central house then in the market. The Association in question was not in command of the necessary funds for the purchase; and negotiations were opened with us as to sharing, in some way, the finances and the advantages of the proposal. While the talks were proceeding somewhat uncertainly, the whole complexion of the case was altered by the intervention of an old friend of one of our members, a Canadian of wealth and high public spirit, but aloof from local politics, who happened to be in England and to hear of our project. He returned to Canada, with some of our problems in his thoughts; and from his hunting camp in the Canadian forests he sent us by cable a proposal, which was nothing less than an offer, on certain terms, to exercise on behalf of our Institute, but entirely at his own charges, the option of purchase of the house to which I alluded a few minutes ago, if that option could be ceded to us. The position was wholly unexpected, there were elements of delicacy in it, and there was an element of extreme urgency. The option was due to expire in a few days; the owner of the property did not see his way to extend it; the Association for whom it had originally been taken was unable to find the funds wherewith to exercise it; and a unique opportunity for accepting a magnificent gift and securing our own future would have been irretrievably lost unless we could take a prompt decision and rely on having the indulgence, confidence and support of the Institute as a whole. We faced the risk. We interviewed the owner, and satisfied him. We were met by the holders of the option and by the Association for which they were acting in the most handsome and unselfish manner; the option was ceded to us, and our donor exercised it on our behalf and agreed to pay the full cost and something over.

We come before you to-night, therefore, with an offer from Colonel R. W. Leonard, in the name of himself and his wife, to present to the Institute, as a permanent home, and thus as a gift to the British Commonwealth, the splendid

building in which we are met, where Chatham lived and the great Derby and Mr. Gladstone, and which was last occupied by that big-hearted athlete and philanthropist, the late Lord Kinnaird. One of the conditions of the offer is that we must not disclose the price Colonel Leonard has paid for the house. It is a large sum, and the house is a splendid one; it is freehold; and attached to it is an area of ground providing ample facilities for almost any extensions we are ever likely to require. In a home of this sort there is nothing to prevent, and everything to stimulate, the Institute rising to the full height of its original ambitions and the full measure of its usefulness to the British Empire and its peoples. The first proposal, therefore, that your Executive Committee have to make to-night is that you should accept the offer of Colonel and Mrs. Leonard of this house as the future home of the Institute, and thus as a gift for the service of the British Commonwealth through the work of ourselves and our successors.

But, if the gift is great, so is the responsibility which it entails. Our new home will have to be adapted for our purposes; a number of structural changes will be necessary; the erection of a hall for our meetings, in the area behind, is warmly advocated; and certain measures for the greater convenience of our members should now be feasible. But above all, we want an endowment which will secure the permanent and adequate maintenance of the property and will allow of our developing our work along the lines that have always been meditated. Speaking quite generally, we should recommend the Institute to aim at an endowment fund of £100,000; part to be available for the upkeep of the estate, and the bulk for the extension of our work—the issue of an Annual Register of Foreign Affairs, an undertaking long contemplated but precluded by lack of funds, the opening of branches, the research and publication which are necessary for moulding and instructing public opinion in our own land and overseas. In fact the most important part of the Institute's work cannot be developed until it is adequately endowed.

To this end, we should propose appealing to our own members at once for the nucleus of such a fund. Colonel Leonard has added to our other obligations to him the promise to subscribe the munificent sum of £8,000 to the fund. With him and ourselves at the head of the subscription list, we should then open a campaign for donations from those who believe in our work and its value. Meanwhile, until the endowment flows in, we have every reason to hope that, by letting off such part of the house as we do not require, we can make good the difference between the mere running costs of the property and those of our present and more modest home in Malet Street. With the outlying buildings the whole premises are much larger than we can use at present. We shall spread ourselves, even under our own roof, only as the funds for such expansion come into sight.

Let me now revert to our position at the moment. Your Executive Committee feels that a natural and proper stage in our evolution would be to incorporate ourselves under a Royal Charter; and provided we see a reasonable prospect of endowment, we advise that our plans be laid for an application for such a Charter. I am not quite sure whether we should, in the event of its being granted, become a Royal Institute (*vice* a British Institute) of International Affairs. But in any case this change in our name would be a fitting recognition of the rôle which we hope to play as a central school of foreign affairs for the whole Commonwealth and not for the island of Great Britain only. On this and other matters a subsequent report will be submitted for your decision. Meanwhile let me suggest for your concurrence what we propose by way of a house-warming.

Colonel Leonard has come over to England in the last few weeks. He is a close friend of our present Colonial Secretary, who was good enough to approach the King with a request that His Majesty should authorise the Prince of Wales to install us formally in our new home, and announce the gift and its implications. The King graciously assented,

and the Prince has fixed the afternoon of November 9th for the ceremony. H.R.H. has also consented to become Visitor of the Institute: the position of Visitor is a purely honorary one, except in so far as it is linked with the authority of a Royal Charter, when I presume it would be a function of the Visitor to see that the terms of the Charter are duly observed.

There is one further constitutional point which perhaps this meeting might consent to settle without awaiting a special report from the Sub-Committee that is looking into our regulations generally. Our intimate association with the problems of the Foreign Office suggests that we should ask your approval to adding the present Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord Curzon, to our list of Presidents. Similarly, the extension of our activities to the Empire as a whole, to which Colonel Leonard's gift commits us, thereby anticipating our own desires, would suggest the association with us, in some formal capacity, of the Prime Ministers of the Dominions and the Viceroy of India; and we ask your permission to approach the present incumbents to accept, for themselves and their successors, the office of Honorary Presidents.

I will not trespass on your endurance longer, except to explain how the property will vest if you consent to our project. With Colonel Leonard's concurrence, we advise that it be vested in trustees, holding and administering it on our behalf, at our cost and in accordance with our wishes; and we advise that the first trustees be four in number—Colonel Leonard himself, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Curzon and Lord Grey of Fallodon.

There is nothing else that I need add at this stage. The suggestions of your Executive Committee have been thrown into the form of a series of draft resolutions, in order to crystallise the issues and to facilitate their examination. Your Executive Committee have been obliged, under great pressure of time and often the necessary seal of secrecy, to take provisional action of no small importance, but they have not presumed to substitute their own views for the

considered wishes of the Institute, and they now submit their whole proceedings and proposals for your confirmation or otherwise.

## II

*Resolutions passed at the General Meeting of the Institute on October 9th, 1923.*

1. That the offer by Colonel and Mrs. Leonard of No. 10 St. James's Square to the British Institute of International Affairs be most gratefully accepted, and that the method of conveying the thanks of the Institute be settled after consultation with the donors.
2. That the property be vested in the following Trustees : the Duke of Devonshire, the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Viscount Grey of Fallodon, and Colonel Leonard, so long as the Institute remains unincorporated.
3. That this meeting confirms the request made to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales that he should be graciously pleased to become Visitor of the Institute ; and that H.R.H. be invited to open No. 10 St. James's Square, as the home of the Institute, on November 9th.
4. That the Executive Committee be authorised to equip and adapt No. 10 St. James' Square in all respects for the purposes of the Institute, to make any arrangements deemed advisable for sub-letting portions of the premises not at present required for purposes of the Institute, and to start a campaign for the provision of the funds requisite both for the preparation of the property and as a permanent endowment for the Institute.
5. That the Executive Committee be instructed to report on the future constitution and financial position of the Institute.
6. That the Executive Committee be authorised to take all necessary steps towards an application for a Royal Charter, or other suitable incorporation.

7. That the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston be invited to become a President of the Institute.
8. That the British and Dominion Premiers and the Viceroy of India be invited to become by virtue of their office Honorary Presidents.
9. That Colonel and Mrs. Leonard should rank on the records of the Institute as founders with all the privileges of members during their lives.

### III

As members will see from No. 4 of the resolutions passed at the General Meeting on October 9th, it was decided on the recommendation of the Executive Committee to start a campaign for the provision of funds necessary for the equipment and permanent endowment of the Institute. By reference to the report which was submitted at the Inaugural Meeting on July 5th, 1920, it will be seen that the raising of an endowment fund was contemplated from the outset, and the Executive Committee think it desirable that the reasons for this course should be clearly set out.

The primary fact to be held in mind is that the Institute was founded not merely for the personal benefit of its own members, but in order to fulfil a purpose of the highest public importance which no other institution existed to discharge. It was recognised that public opinion is and should be to an increasing extent the determining factor in the sphere of foreign no less than in that of domestic affairs. From the nature of the case public opinion in questions of foreign policy is guided by a comparatively small number of experts, to a far greater extent than in social questions, of which a larger proportion of the

electorates have personal experience. The first object of the Institute was to enable those who influence public opinion on international questions to write or speak with a better knowledge of the subjects they handle. The enlightenment of public opinion on these subjects is of such cardinal importance to the world at large that for that reason alone the specialists with whom that duty rests would be justified in appealing to the public to assist them by helping to provide the buildings, library, map-room, and other equipment necessary for the purpose.

The public men, however, who do this work are not limited to London. The members of the Institute are distributed all over the world. To these the Institute can give no help except in so far as it can distribute the results of its researches in printed form. For this reason the Journal has been established and the periodical survey of foreign affairs has been rendered available.

Even these modest undertakings have seriously strained the financial resources of the Institute. The further extension of this work, and even the most modest equipment of the library, have been prevented by lack of funds. If the cost were to be met solely from the pockets of the members the work could only be extended either by increasing the subscription or by an indefinite enlargement of the membership. But to raise the subscription would exclude a large number of the most useful members, who cannot afford more than two guineas, and this alternative has been definitely rejected. On the other hand, an indefinite extension of the numbers would quickly destroy the character of the Institute as an expert body. Either policy would seriously impair the

capacity of the Institute to do the vital public service which it was founded to discharge.

But the service which the Institute can render neither is nor ought to be limited to its own members. One of its earliest tasks was the preparation and issue of the *History of the Peace Conference*. The present price of this work is beyond the means of many, and yet its production was only made possible by subsidies of over £2,000 furnished by private donors.

The Institute should also be in a position to give real assistance and support to other cognate undertakings, such, for instance, as the *British Year Book of International Law*, which is now issued under its auspices. And all books of this nature should be rendered available at a price which those who write or speak on foreign affairs can afford to pay.

In order to form clear and instructed views on foreign affairs it is not necessary that the public should be told the secrets whispered in Chanceries. The main difficulty which confronts those who address the public is to get access in the time available to the information and documents already published throughout the world. A great deal will have been accomplished if most of this published matter is collected and rendered available in the buildings of the Institute. But infinitely more will have been done if careful narratives are compiled with all the more important documents appended thereto and distributed in printed form to libraries, newspapers and public men throughout the Empire. They are then available at the moment when they are needed, for it is seldom that a writer or speaker can spend days or weeks in collecting his material. On any matter arising out of the

Peace Conference a public man could gather in a few hours from the History issued by the Institute information which, without it, he could not collect in months. One of the greatest tasks which the Institute can accomplish in the future is the foundation of an Annual Register of Foreign Affairs, a purely factual narrative carefully dated, checked and liberally supplemented with published documents. Such work is largely thrown away unless it is issued at a price which those who need it can afford to pay. By the gift of 10 St. James's Square the Institute is furnished with a building admirably suited for the production of work like this. But the cost of the work and of its printing cannot possibly be met from the slender resources of the members alone. The cost can be defrayed only by means of an endowment raised from the public for whose benefit the work is done. It is difficult to think of any object for which public munificence can be invoked with more cogency. And the public to whom the appeal can be made is exceedingly wide. The historic building given for the purpose is in itself an eloquent appeal, and we believe that an endowment of at least £100,000 is needed to put it to its full use. The donors have started the subscription list with a cheque for £8,000.

If, however, the Institute is to make this appeal with effect, the members must show that they themselves believe in the value of its work. We have also to hold in mind that we enjoy special opportunities and advantages by reason of our membership. When asking the public throughout the British Commonwealth to furnish the Trustees with contributions sufficient to enable the property they hold to be fully utilised, we must be in a position to show

that we ourselves are prepared to do our part. The Committee appeal unhesitatingly, therefore, to all members for contributions within their respective means, however small. It is of great importance that the contributions should be spread over the whole body of members and not merely provided by the generosity of a few. In a campaign for raising £100,000 a certain administrative expenditure will of course be needed, and for this the Committee ask to be allowed to draw on the contributions furnished by members. Contributions, which may be paid by instalments, should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer of the Institute at Malet Street, who will place them to the account of the Trustees, together with the £8,000 already contributed by Colonel and Mrs. Leonard. An Order form is enclosed.